



HEROES OF THE
VETERANS RECOGNITION CEREMONY

8th

2016 VETERANS RECOGNITION CEREMONY

Hosted by: Col. Paul Cook (Ret.)

U.S. Congressman
California, 8th District



October 27, 2016

Dear Friends,

I am honored that you are able to join me in celebrating our third annual “Heroes of the 8th” Veterans Recognition Ceremony.

With its five military installations and thousands of veterans and active service members, the people of California’s 8th Congressional District know well the meaning of sacrifice. The selflessness and spirit of service on display in our many communities is a constant reminder of what makes our country exceptional.

This year we recognize those who answered the call to serve their country in the U.S. Armed Forces and answered the call once again by serving in our local communities as public safety professionals. Recently, our region has faced a variety of crises and tragedies. From acts of terrorism to devastating wildfires, our public safety professionals have been tasked with the enormous responsibility of responding to every threat. Each day, they keep dangerous criminals safely behind bars, they maintain order in our communities, and they keep fires from destroying homes and threatening lives.

While our communities could not function without them, we don’t always appreciate or recognize the contributions these heroes have made. Tonight, we acknowledge and thank this group of veterans in particular, while acknowledging contributions made by all veterans. I’ll also take this opportunity to update you on federal legislation and federal programs affecting veterans.

Our veterans’ countless acts of selfless service to our communities and country represent the best of America. In honoring these brave individuals, I hope they can serve as an inspiration to a new generation of heroes ready and eager to follow in their footsteps.

Semper Fi,

Col. Paul Cook (Ret.)
Member of Congress, CA-08



Col. Paul Cook (Ret.)

An infantry officer who served with distinction in the United States Marine Corps, Cook's military career spanned twenty-six years. He entered USMC Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Quantico, Virginia in March of 1966. After graduating from OCS in May, he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant. During his combat tour in Vietnam, Cook was awarded a Bronze Star Medal with the Combat "V" for Valor, and was subsequently awarded two Purple Heart Medals for wounds sustained during combat operations.

In January 1968, Cook was promoted to Captain while assigned as company commander with the infantry training regiment at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Cook was assigned to the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms in 1983 where he served as the Inspector General and Officer-in-Charge of the Reserve Support Unit. In April 1988, Cook was promoted to Colonel and subsequently assigned to the Marine Corps Base at Camp Pendleton to serve as the Area Commander. Cook completed his Marine Corps career at Twentynine Palms, CA. On September 30, 1992, he was honorably discharged from service with the US Marine Corps.

After retirement, Cook continued his service by seeking and winning a seat on the Yucca Valley Town Council in 1998, ultimately serving as Mayor. From 2006-2012, Cook served as the Assemblyman for California's 65th Assembly District, and in November 2012, Cook was elected to serve in the US House of Representatives. He represents California's 8th Congressional District which includes the High Desert communities of San Bernardino County as well as Mono and Inyo Counties. Currently, he serves on the House Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, and Natural Resources committees.

Holding a lifelong commitment to education, Cook taught history and political science at Copper Mountain College, California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), and University of California, Riverside (UCR). He holds a master's in political science from UCR and a master's in public administration from CSUSB. He and his wife Jeanne reside in Yucca Valley.



**Heroes of the 8th
Honorees
October 27, 2016**

Jeffery Braughton
US Army
California Highway Patrol



Adam Clark
US Navy
CAL Fire

Allandus Coates
US Marine Corps
Federal Bureau of Prisons





Glenn Dixon
US Air Force
Federal Bureau of Prisons

Dan Filter
US Air Force
San Bernardino County
Fire Department



Chadwick Finlen
US Marine Corps
San Bernardino County
Sheriff's Department

Omar Gutierrez
US Marine Corps
CAL Fire



Scott Hamilton
US Army
San Bernardino County
Sheriff's Department

John Hayes
US Marine Corps
San Bernardino County
Sheriff's Department





Mike Horton
US Army
San Bernardino County
Fire Department

Steven Mantei
US Army
California Highway Patrol



Thomas Marshall
US Marine Corps
San Bernardino County
Fire Department

Eric Ogaz
US Army
San Bernardino County
Sheriff's Department



Robert Roberts
US Marine Corps
California Highway Patrol

Jake Salgado
US Army National Guard
Apple Valley Fire
Protection District





Donald Shults
US Army
Federal Bureau of Prisons

Steve Sillings
US Air Force
San Bernardino County
Fire Department



James Smith
US Army
California Highway Patrol



Rich Solometo
US Air Force
San Bernardino County
Fire Department



Jeffery Toll
US Army
San Bernardino County
Sheriff's Department

Karl Von Oesen
US Navy
San Bernardino County
Fire Department





Darrell Waltman
US Air Force
San Bernardino County
Fire Department

Lance Williams
US Army
San Bernardino County
Sheriff's Department



Brent Wood
US Marine Corps
San Bernardino County
Sheriff's Department

Congressman Cook Introduced Bill to Protect the Purple Heart

Congressman Cook introduced HR 6234, the Private Corrado Piccoli Purple Heart Preservation Act, a bipartisan bill that prohibits the sale of any Purple Heart medal presented by the government to a wounded servicemember or their family.

Military collectors often acquire these Purple Hearts, sometimes through underhanded means, and resell them as collectable items. These medals sell for hundreds and even thousands of dollars on the collector market. As Veterans or their survivors pass away, dozens of these Purple Hearts become lost every year and find their way into pawn shops, junk stores, and estate sales.

HR 6234 is named for Private Corrado Piccoli, a WWII infantryman killed in action in 1944. A Purple Heart medal accompanied the telegram informing Private Piccoli's family of his death. Sadly, years later and after his parents' passing, the medal was lost. Army Captain Zachariah Fike discovered the lost medal in 2011 and, after researching the name engraved on the medal, returned it to Private Piccoli's surviving siblings. The experience inspired Captain Fike to found Purple Hearts Reunited, an organization that has, to date, returned over 300 Purple Hearts and rescued 700 more.

Service organizations, like Purple Hearts Reunited, work tirelessly to rescue these medals and return them to families. The profiteering actions of military collectors make this task even more difficult as medals find their way onto the market and away from their rightful places of honor. Captain Fike was honored as the Army Times Soldier of the Year for his efforts and approached Rep. Cook about introducing legislation to protect these Purple Hearts and help return them to families.

Rep. Cook, wounded twice in combat himself, said, "These military collectors cheapen the Purple Heart by buying and selling this symbol of sacrifice like a pack of baseball cards. I'm committed to defending our Veterans and that means preserving their symbols of honor like the Purple Heart. These medals belong with families or in museums, not on some collector's auction block."

This legislation is enjoying bipartisan support in Congress and has the endorsement of dozens of Veteran's Service Organizations – Air Force Association, Air Force Sergeants Association, Air Force Women Officers Association, American Military Retirees Association, American Retirees Association, Army Navy Union, Association of the United States Navy, AMVETS, Armed Forces Marketing Counsel, Army Aviation Association of America, AMSUS, Association of the United States Army, Association of the United States Navy, CWOA, Enlisted Association of the National Guard, Fleet Reserve Association, Gold Star Wives of America, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Jewish War Veterans of USA, Marine Corps Reserve Association, The Medal of Honor Society, Military Officers Association of America, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Military Order of the World Wars, National Association for Uniformed Services, National Guard Association of the United States, National Military Family Association, Naval Enlisted Reserve Association, Service Women's Action Network, The Military Chaplains Association, The Flag and General Officers Network, The Retired Enlisted Association, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, USCG Chief Petty Officers Association, US Army Warrant Officers Association, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.

The HIRE Vets Act Passed the Veterans Affairs Committee with Unanimous Support

Congressman Cook's veteran jobs bill passed out of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. This bipartisan bill would promote private sector recruiting, hiring, and retaining of men and women who served honorably in the U.S. military through a voluntary and efficient program. Specifically, it would create an awards program recognizing the meaningful, verifiable efforts undertaken by employers – both large and small – to hire and retain veterans. Cook designed the program to be self-funded.

Through the U.S. Department of Labor, the HIRE Vets Act would allow businesses to display “HIRE Vets Medallions” on products and marketing materials. These medallions would be awarded as part of a four-tiered system – Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum – associated with specific hiring and retention goals each year.

The program also establishes similar tiered awards for small and mid-sized businesses with less than 500 employees. To ensure proper oversight, the Secretary of Labor would be required to provide Congress with annual reports on the success of the program with regard to veteran employment and retention results.

Congressman Cook said, “The HIRE Vets Act is an opportunity for Americans to see which companies truly live up to the employment promises they make to veterans. Veterans who serve this country honorably shouldn't struggle to find employment, and this bill creates an innovative system to encourage and recognize employers who make veterans a priority in their hiring practices.”

MY OFFICE IS HERE TO HELP YOU WITH THE VA

If you can't get an answer from the Department of Veterans Affairs in a timely fashion, or if you feel you have been treated unfairly, my office may be able to help resolve a problem or get you the information you need. While we cannot guarantee you a favorable outcome, we will do our best to help you receive a fair and timely response to your problem.

All questions and concerns should be directed to my Apple Valley District Office by calling (760) 247-1815 or by visiting Cook.House.Gov.

